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Posted on Tue, Jul. 12, 2005

## NJ senators push for chemical plant, port money

DONNA DE LA CRUZ

Associated Press

**WASHINGTON** - New Jersey's two U.S. senators joined their Democratic colleagues Tuesday to urge that increased funding for security at ports and chemical plants be included in the homeland security appropriations bill.

Sen. Jon Corzine wants more money for security at chemical plants, a measure he first introduced in 2001. Sen. Frank Lautenberg is teaming up with Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., in an effort to make U.S. ports more secure.

Lautenberg on Tuesday also spoke passionately against an amendment he says does not give enough money to emergency first responders in states with high terror threats.

Senators began debate Monday on the Homeland Security Department's overall budget.

Corzine said he hopes his Chemical Plant Security Act will be passed by Congress this year. The measure would establish federal security standards for chemical facilities, including requiring reinforced storage tanks, more security officers and improved detection devices.

"Unguarded chemical plants present a clear and present danger to the American people and are a vulnerability that Congress must address," Corzine said, adding that his measure has received bipartisan support.

There are seven chemical plants that have large amounts of toxic and flammable chemicals in New Jersey that are located near population centers of 1 million or more, according to a recent survey by the Congressional Research Service.

The Government Accounting Office, the investigative arm of Congress, said in April that the nation's chemical facilities "present an attractive target for terrorists intent on causing massive damage," said Corzine, who is running for governor.

Also at risk of a terror attack are the nation's ports, the group of Democratic senators said at a news conference on Capitol Hill. Kerry and Lautenberg's amendment would "fix gaping holes" in the Homeland Security Department's efforts to secure America's ports, Kerry said. The measure would require the department's inspector general to report to Congress on the agency's progress in implementing recommended changes to improve a program that issues grants to increase port security.

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Lautenberg did not attend the news conference. He was on the Senate floor speaking vehemently against an amendment that would direct more money to emergency first responders in most states. The measure, offered by Sens. Susan Collins, R-Maine, and Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., would distributed \$763 million among all states and earmark an additional \$1.2 billion for the highest-risk areas. A competing Senate plan, offered by Lautenberg and two other senators, would give \$579 million to states and \$1.3 billion to high-risk areas.

"How can we, in the wake of the London attacks, now move to take funding away from where the threats are?" Lautenberg said on the Senate floor. "It makes no sense."



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